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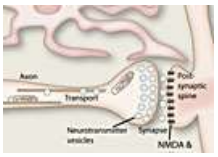
Scientific Biomedical Writer & Editor



Frequently Asked Questions

What is your rate?

My current rate of $70/hr is less than the median rate for freelance scientific medical writing, as surveyed by the American Medical Writer's Association.

What is my USA tax classification as an Independent Contractor?

I use the W-8BEN form because I'm a Canadian working remotely in Canada. I have an Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) rather than an SSN, and I pay the tax in Canada; there is no withholding for work done in Canada (income tax treaty).

It is important to understand that there is a massive difference between W-8BEN and 1099 Independent Contractors and W-2 employment on contract basis, who we often refer to simply as contractors. Independent Contractors are truly independent. No one is paying the employer share of taxes such as Social Security and Medicare. They are not protected by Workers Compensation or Unemployment Insurance. They do not have access to employer-sponsored benefits plans. In a nutshell, they are like an independent business providing a service to another business.

What will my project cost?

I'm willing to give a free estimate for large, well-defined projects for institute or department directors who have been referred to me and are serious about going ahead with my service. Otherwise, please use the typical costs below as your guide. When I'm about 10% into the contracted work I'll give you a projected cost for your specific project. If you need a fixed quote before I start work, I will charge for my time to prepare the quote, which can take several hours. Alternatively, tell me your budget and I'll estimate what level of service I can provide for that cost.

For every estimated project, I provide a letter of agreement that defines the scope of the work. I will invoice you biweekly, monthly, or per deliverable, as agreed.

Typical costs

- Full editing: rewriting plus substantive, analytical, and copy editing of a research report, review article, or grant proposal: $3,500
- Writing a research report for a target journal, including literature search, based on a PowerPoint presentation: $6,000 to $9,000
- Writing a full literature review including literature search: $9,000
- Writing an NIH R01 grant proposal for preclinical or translational research, or the introductory parts for a randomized clinical trial (Specific Aims, Significance, Innovation, Preliminary Studies), including literature search (may include designing figures): $8,000 to $10,000
- Writing a grant proposal to a private foundation for research or a quality-of-life program: $2,800
- Literature search and a written paragraph or section for integration into the Introduction section of a research report or grant proposal: $870
- Set of 6 targeted letters of intent (LOIs) to foundations: $2,600
- Illustration of hypothesized cell signaling mechanisms: $1,800
  —Illustrations are designed and produced by the same person who wrote or edited the manuscript. This is a rare combination. No time is needed to give directions to the artist/designer.

What will your service give me?

My service allows authors who are constrained by time, writing skills, or English fluency to compete fairly for publication. I will optimize your manuscript or proposal for clarity

TIPS for organizing your manuscript

First, work out what the figures and tables would look like. Give each figure a simple, declarative title in the form of a sentence. Most of the content of the paper should be evident from reading these few sentences alone. When the sentences look as if they both tell a story and have a unified message, it's time to start writing.

Pare down and sort your paragraphs so that each paragraph has only one message. Keep it to under 150 words.

State the topic and message of every paragraph in the first sentence (or two). Don't rely on the reader to stay with all the accumulating details without knowing where it's headed. For complicated technical subjects, the structure of a paragraph should be more like watching a movie that starts with the ending, then plays out the whole story as a flashback, finding out how we got to that known conclusion.

State the logical link from one idea to the next. To the reader, the reason for placing one sentence after another is not obvious; you need to indicate how the sentences are related. Use transitional words such as "Because," "Therefore," "Furthermore," "In contrast," "Nevertheless," "Although," "For example," "As a result," "Surprisingly," "First, X… Second, Y…," "Evidence for this is…"

INTRODUCTION: State the known. Then, at the very end, state the unknown, the specific question (or questions) that the experiments answer, and the experimental approach. Use no more than one sentence each for the unknown, the question, and the approach.

RESULTS: Give the main or most important findings first, and only those pertinent to the question. State the result first, followed by the supporting data: "X was significantly greater than Y (Fig. 1)". If there's no figure, data can appear in this form at the end of the sentence: [94 +/- 3 (SD) vs. 85 +/- 5 mmHg, $P < .02$].

DISCUSSION: In the first paragraph, state the answers to the questions posed in the Introduction by mirroring the question exactly as it was asked, followed by supporting evidence for each answer. Give the supporting evidence in one or two sentences only, in the form (for two answers): "Evidence for answer A is results X and Y. Evidence for answer B is result Z." At the very beginning, signal the answer by starting with a phrase such as "This study shows," or "Our results indicate."

End with an impact statement emphasizing the importance of the work. Try to avoid simply stating that further studies are warranted. It's stronger to end with a statement of what knowledge you're contributing.

and impact. I will also format and style your manuscript to conform to your target journal.

How do you handle remote work and long-distance collaboration?

In addition to telephone and email, I have had success using Gmail video chat, Skype video chat, and Dropbox.

What are your specialties?

My specialty knowledge of subjects includes the following: biology, neuroscience, neuropsychology, pharmacology, cell signaling, receptors, evolutionary developmental biology (evo-devo), mechanisms and mediators of cancer pain, nociception, epigenetics, historical geology, and astrobiology.

My specialty knowledge of document form includes the following: scientific journal manuscript format and style, ICMJE & AMA style, the new NIH R01 grant-application short form, scientific abstracts, and informational graphic design.

What software tools do you use?

Tools that I currently use include Clarivate Analytics EndNote X9; Adobe Acrobat, Illustrator, and Photoshop; Microsoft Word 2010, Excel, and PowerPoint; and advanced production tools for image processing. Microsoft Word skills include design and formatting of tables and using document styles.

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